

## **Executive Summary**

### **Consumer Fraud and Identity Theft Complaint Data**

#### **January – December 2005**

- Consumer Sentinel now contains almost 3 million fraud and identity theft complaints and is accessible to over 1,400 law enforcement agencies – including every state attorney general in the U.S. and consumer protection agencies in 19 nations.
- The FTC received over 685,000 Consumer Sentinel complaints during calendar year 2005 - 63% represented fraud and 37% were identity theft complaints.

#### ***Fraud***

- A total of 431,118 of the Consumer Sentinel complaints were fraud-related. Internet Auctions was the leading complaint category with 12% of the overall complaints, followed by Foreign Money Offers (8%), Shop-at-Home/Catalog Sales (8%), Prizes/Sweepstakes and Lotteries (7%), Internet Services and Computer Complaints (5%), Business Opportunities and Work-at-Home Plans (2%), Advance-Fee Loans and Credit Protection (2%), and Telephone Services (2%).
- Consumers reported fraud losses of over \$680 million; the median monetary loss was \$350.
- Internet-related complaints accounted for 46% of all reported fraud complaints, with monetary losses of over \$335 million and a median loss of \$345.
- The percentage of Internet-related fraud complaints with “Wire Transfer” as the reported payment method more than tripled between calendar years 2003 and 2005, increasing by 12 percentage points.
- Some 55% of fraud complaints where the company's method of initial contact was reported indicate Internet solicitations - electronic mail 35% and web 20%. 73% of all fraud complaints reported the method of initial contact.
- The major metropolitan areas with the highest per capita rates of consumer fraud reported are the Washington DC area; Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL; and Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA.

#### ***Identity Theft***

- Credit card fraud (26%) was the most common form of reported identity theft followed by phone or utilities fraud (18%), bank fraud (17%), and employment fraud (12%). Other significant categories of identity theft reported by victims were government documents/benefits fraud (9%) and loan fraud (5%).
- “Electronic Fund Transfer” related identity theft was the most frequently reported type of identity theft bank fraud during calendar year 2005.
- The major metropolitan areas with the highest per capita rates of reported identity theft are Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale, AZ; Las Vegas-Paradise, NV; and Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA.